

"New Right" View

With Alarm

By Rabbi David Saperstein

(Rabbi Saperstein is co-director and counsel for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations Religious Action Center in Washington)

Amidst the political vagaries of this **election** year, certain ominous patterns have clearly emerged. None is so alarming as the growth of the so-called "New Right" which threatens to alter inexorably the political realities of this country to the detriment of the Jewish community and the nation itself.

The New Right is a network of arch-conservative groups which pool their vast mailing lists, resources, and political influence in an effort to undo many of the progressive changes which this nation has undergone in the 20th century.

It is a loose coalition of old-line extremist groups like the KKK and John Birch Society; political fund-raising groups like the National Conservative Political Action Committee; think-tank outfits like the Heritage Foundation; direct mail operations like Ravco; single issue groups like the so-called "pro-life" groups and gun control opponents; and fundamentalist religious/political groups like The Moral Majority.

From only a handful of groups that, according to "Congressional Quarterly," raised scarcely \$250,000 in the 1972 campaigns, the New Right is now an ultra-sophisticated network of 60 organizations that may directly and indirectly pour some \$30 million into the **1980** campaign.

Collectively, these new organizations have created a centralized political action fundraising and letter writing capability that dwarfs any previous or existing political movement in American life.

Five factors can be cited which make the threat of these arch-conservative coalitions so immediate.

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First, no political force on the American scene today utilizes advanced technology as effectively as does the New Right. Spurred by direct mail wizard Richard Viguerie, the New Right Coalitions have sophisticatedly computerized mailing lists from scores of ultraright and single issue organizations to provide a list of 30 million supporters with an estimated core of 12 million.

One example of their effectiveness is the struggle to stop ratification of the Treaty to Ban Genocide. This international treaty, drafted in the offices of the UAHG by Raphael Lemkin in the late 1940's, attempts to implement into international law concrete steps to prevent a repetition of the Holocaust.

The treaty has been ratified by 87 countries but the U.S. has failed to ratify it for over 30-years because, according to Sen. Proxmire, "every time we try to have the treaty brought up for a vote, the mail runs 100-1 against it."

The far right has made this issue a cause celebre, sending out millions of pieces of mail asking readers to oppose the treaty as an abrogation of American sovereignty.

The second factor is the political sophistication which the New Right groups use their large campaign chests. Each election they raise millions of dollars and target that money to defeat leading liberal members of the House and Senate.

This year, among the candidates they have targeted in the Senate are Sen. Alan Cranston, majority whip of the U.S. Senate; Sen. Frank Church, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Sen. George McGovern, member of the Foreign Relations Committee and the symbol of Senate liberals; Sen. Birch Bayn, chairman of the Constitutional subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee; Sen. John Culver, one of the youngest and most respected liberals; Sen. Jacob Javits, senior Republican on four committees including the Foreign Relations Committee; and Sen. Robert Packwood, liberal pro-Israel Senator from Oregon.

According to Interchange, an organization which monitors activities of the New Right, this new right wing is far more willing to involve itself in expedient, though ideologically questionable alliances than was the "old right." Thus, for example, Sen. Church, one of Israel's staunchest supporters, faces an opposition financed by an alarming amalgam of New Right and Arab money.

If the New Right succeeds in defeating these and similar candidates, not only will the complexion of the Congress and its leadership be radically altered years to come but a message will be sent to every other congressperson and state legislator:

"If you want to be reelected, you must play ball with us. The liberals are no longer a significant factor in American politics."

Another problematic alliance involves the New Right and Israel. Several groups, including Rev. Falwell's Moral Majority, believe that Israel is not only a strong opponent to Soviet expansionism, but the second coming of the Messiah can only take place after the re-establishment of Jewish authority in the Biblical land of Israel.

Recently a number of fundamentalist Christian leaders led by Rev. Falwell were warmly received

by Prime Minister Begin to whom they expressed their strong support for Israel.

Some Jewish Leaders argue that we must not be overtly critical of the religious New Right lest it result in a cutback of this support. Others however, disturbed by Rev. Falwell's domestic political agenda, criticize this alliance.

The third factor concerns the religious overtones of this movement. The resurgence of born-again fundamentalist Protestantism has provided a religious facade for much of the activities of the New Right.

The growth of the electronic church, using television as its pulpit, trivializes American religion, while creating a broad based group of millions of Americans who are being taught to be a good Christian means to support extreme right-wing political views.

Several of the more prominent TV churches have established active right wing political arms -- in particular, the Christian Voice and Rev. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority.

At a massive rally of fundamentalist Christians in Washington on April 29, the basic message participants delivered as they lobbied senators and congresspersons was, "We will pray to Jesus to show you the light so that America can be a good Christian country."

The fourth factor has been its highly sophisticated use of modern propaganda techniques. Its attacks on liberal politicians and positions are often based on misleading or ad hominem arguments.

By mouthing extreme right religious slogans or expressing support for the particular concern of a single issue group, it has been successful in reaping a rich harvest of financial and political support from the unwary who do not understand the real position of many of the fringe groups involved in the New Right.

As the New Right marshals strength and numbers it has resulted in a draining of efforts and resources from the real issues facing the nation.

Furthermore, as Jacob Clayman, president of the Industrial Union department, AFL-CIO has pointed out, "By besmirching and dividing legitimate avenues of debate and decision, (the New Right) inhibits our ability to control our own destiny."

The fifth factor is the quiescence of American liberals. At a time when the Vietnam War, Watergate, and Abscam scandals have fostered a skepticism about political leadership; at a time when inflation and growing unemployment have created a sense of desperation among people who then seek panaceas and scapegoats; at a time when the Great Society programs have failed to bring the messianic age, the liberal community has thrown its hands up in frustration and withdrawn from the great social struggles of our times.